New York
Theatre Critics' Reviews
1957

Volume XVIII, Number 2 • Rachel W. Coffin, *Editor* • Week of January 28, 1957

1957 PRODUCTIONS

Premieres in Other Years

Original Reviews Appeared In These Volumes

1956 Vol.

Stage Play	*Page*
*Apple Cart (The)	258
*Auntie Mame	229
*Bells Are Ringing	182
*Candide	176
Girls of Summer	197
Good Woman of Setzuan (The)	161
*Happiest Millionaire (The)	193
*Happy Hunting	166
*Li'l Abner	202
*Long Day's Journey Into Night	217
Macbeth	237
*Major Barbara	233
*Middle of the Night	370
*Mr. Wonderful	339
*Most Happy Fella (The)	308
*My Fair Lady	345
*Reluctant Debutante (The)	269
Richard II	253
Romeo and Juliet	250
Saint Joan	285
*Separate Tables	246
Speaking of Murder	157
Troilus and Cressida	149
*Uncle Willie	154

•

1955 Vol.

*Damn Yankees	310
*Diary of Anne Frank (The)	257
*Inherit the Wind	322
*Matchmaker (The)	194
*No Time for Sergeants	238

**Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play week of January 28, 1957*

1957 PRODUCTIONS

Premieres During 1957

Reviews Appear in This Volume

Stage Play	*Page*
*Clearing in the Woods (A)	393
*Hidden River (The)	378
*Measure for Measure	381
Small War on Murray Hill	397
Waiting for Godot	385
*Waltz of the Toreadors (The)	390

Theatre Openings

"The Hidden River"
"Measure for Measure"
"Waiting for Godot"

**Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play week of January 28, 1957*

Theatre Critics' Reviews brings you each week the complete reviews as they originally appeared in these New York newspapers.

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK POST
NEW YORK MIRROR
NEW YORK WORLD TELEGRAM & THE SUN
NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK TIMES

All Reviews copyrighted by the newspapers and reproduced by permission.

Yearly Subscription $25.00

Published by CRITICS' THEATRE REVIEWS, Inc., 235 East 22nd Street, New York 10, N. Y.

"The Hidden River"

DAILY NEWS

January 24, 1957

'Hidden River' a Literary Drama About the Aftermath of a War

By JOHN CHAPMAN

Ruth and Augustus Goetz have developed a special craft of making plays out of novels—not the cheap, bang-bang novel, but the work of fiction which claims literary integrity and more than a casual interest in human character. Their latest work, adapted from Storm Jameson's novel, "The Hidden River," was given an impressive production at the Playhouse last evening.

This time, the Goetzes concern themselves with a time after World War II and a situation in a prosperous wine-growing family who live in a manor house near Vouvray in the Touraine country of France. As Stewart Chaney has designed this house, it is not unlike La Bechellerie, where Anatole France died.

Lots of Background

The situation among these people is this: One of the tribe, who was active in the Resistance during the war, was tortured to death when somebody betrayed him to the Germans. Now, in 1950, another of the tribe, Uncle Daniel, has been sent home from a French prison, where he was confined for collaborating with the Germans. He has been sent home because he is dying. His collaboration was an intellectual friendship with a German general during the Occupation—a friendship which had begun long before the war.

I am reporting this much of the story of "The Hidden River" to indicate that the Goetzes, like novelist Jameson, have been meticulous in laying the groundwork of the drama. Not until they have their background firmly established do they move to a theatrical climax. Once they have started moving, they build their play steadily, and they end it on a chilling note of horror.

But it has taken five scenes to uncover, completely, the traitor who put the finger on a gallant young member of the underground and brought about his death at German hands. This young man has been devotedly loved and the identity of his betrayer has long been sought. Most particularly, his loss has made an implacably vengeful woman of his mother.

Admirably Acted

As the story progresses, as steadily as the River Loire itself, one comes to hear much of the pointlessness of war, much about the reason why men kill to protect whatever country happens to be theirs. One follows the inevitable unmasking of the traitor with quickening interest, and the finale of the drama is a thrilling one.

There is to me, a drawback to the play—and a simple one. Everybody on the stage speaks of the dead hero with great devotion and thirsts for revenge. But I can't get so emotionally involved because I never knew him and didn't see him captured or killed.

Under Robert Lewis' direction, the acting is admirably paced. There is a fine performance by Lili Darvas as the vengeful mother and an intellectually cynical one by Dennis King as the dying "collaborator." There is earnest work by Robert Preston as the present head of this household of vintners, and excellent work by Peter Brandon as Preston's younger brother. Gaby Rodgers, Jack Bittner, Tonio Selwart and others fill a well-chosen cast, and David King-Wood gives an exceptionally clean-cut performance as a quiet Englishman.

"THE HIDDEN RIVER"

Play in three acts and five scenes by Ruth and Augustus Goetz based on Storm Jameson's novel; staged by Robert Lewis; setting and lighting by Stewart Chaney; costumes by Anna Hill Johnstone; presented by Martin Gabel and Henry Margolis at the Playhouse, January 23, 1957, The cast:

Father Baussan.....Jack Bittner
Jean Monnerie....Robert Preston
Francis Monnerie, Peter Brandon
Marie Regnier.....Lili Darvas
Elizabeth Regnier, .Gaby Rodgers
Adam Hartley, .David King-Wood
Amalie.....Margot Lassner
Daniel Monnerie...Dennis King
Gen. Otto Von Kettler.....
Tonio Selwart
Doctor Montalti, .Roger DeKoven

Journal American

January 24, 1957

Acting Fine In a Skillful Melodrama

By JOHN McCLAIN

THERE IS suspicion and suspense galore at The Playhouse, where "The Hidden River" inundated the premises last night.

The circumstances hark back to the last World War and the recurrent question of loyalties; where are the shades of meaning and how irreconcilable the punishment for infraction? These are the elements at issue.

An elderly French gentleman returns to his comfortable home on the banks of the Loire, mercifully released from prison sentence as a collaborator.

He had been friendly with a German general and was believed to have given information which led to the death of a patriotic member of his own family, yet he dies without solving the mystery.

Unrelenting Ferocity

This adaptation by Ruth and Augustus Goetz of Storm Jameson's novel takes full advantage of the conflicting emotions in the household.

There is the unrelenting ferocity of the elder son, the almost unreasoning contempt of the woman who loved him, the pall of disbelief that hangs over the premises.

If it is apparent early in the proceedings what the outcome will be, the dramatic pitch is well sustained through the ensuing scenes.

This is due in large measure to clear and forceful writing, and some inspired acting on the part of Robert Preston, Dennis King, Lili Darvas, Gaby Rodgers and Peter Brandon.

Mr. Preston, who seems to be at home equally in comedy and drama, here lets his hair grow and becomes a French resistance patriot, an earnest young man consumed with the vagaries of human behavior and the questionable future of the world. He is very good.

Rewarding Evening

Dennis King, the faltering father, has a rewarding evening in his portrayal of a Frenchman going to his grave without the blessing of a fair tribunal, and Lili Darvas gives one of her expert and authoritative impersonations as the woman he loved.

Peter Brandon is excellent as the weak and worldly younger brother, and Gaby Rodgers is decorative and ingenuous as Miss Darvas' daughter.

There are other bright contributions by Jack Bittner, David King-Wood, Tonio Selwart, Roger De Koven and Margot Lassner.

"The Hidden River" is mostly melodrama; it is skillfully mounted and wonderfully well executed. It makes a few points about integrity and the price of betrayal, but it more often appeals to solid theatricals. It is well worth a visit.

New York Post

January 24, 1957

By Richard Watts Jr.

A Drama Concerning Collaborators

The capacity for being disturbing in the theater is an important one, and "The Hidden River" certainly possesses that quality. The adaptation by Ruth and Augustus Goetz of the novel by Storm Jameson, which opened last night at the Playhouse, combines suspense melodrama with contemplation of moral issues in a study of the aftermath of French war time collaboration with the Nazis, and one of its arresting values is that the suspense lies as much in the outcome of its moral considerations as it does in the more primitive matter of tracking down a culprit.

If "The Hidden River" has one emphatic point to make, it is simply this: How fortunate are the people of a country that has never been occupied by a ruthless enemy! For the Goetz drama is not concerned with the denunciation of wartime villains. Its preoccupation is with degrees of guilt and responsibility, with the reasons given to themselves and to the world by collaborators and those who thought they were above the battle, and you are left with the chastening reflection that one never subjected to the same pressures should be careful about throwing stones.

The Intellectual

All of this is, I think, of interest and importance, but to make their point the Goetzes have to do another disturbing thing. One of their chief characters is an aging intellectual, who was so certain that wars are futile and settle nothing that he entertained in his home a German officer he had known in his youth. He never actually gave physical support to the enemy and he tried to save a priest from a concentration camp, but he did give them the moral assistance of his friendship. And, as acted by Dennis King, he becomes one of the play's most attractive figures.

It should be added at once that "The Hidden River" is no defense of collaboration. Although its main character, a former leader of the resistance, is inclined toward tolerance of the past and a belief in letting bygones be bygones, he does take a stand when the true collaborator is exposed and he not only turns on him with bitterness but refuses to have anything to do with the unwitting gains that another's deal with the enemy had brought him. There is no doubt about the drama's final viewpoint; it is merely concerned with understanding as well as disapproval.

Suspense and Tension

Perhaps it is unfair to the play to object because the intellectual man-above-the-battle is treated with so much tenderness, but I can't help thinking that, by making him such an attractive figure, "The Hidden River" is given a certain suggestion of ambiguity. This may be philosophically valuable, but it isn't equally helpful dramatically. Yet I think there is no doubt that the Goetz drama has consistent suspense and tension, and, after a rather halting first act, it is interesting in both its melodrama and the uncomfortable issues it brings up.

Nor can there be any question concerning the excellence of the acting. Robert Preston, long recognized as a brilliant light comedian, is honest and moving as the central character, and, in addition to Mr. King's skillful portrayal, there is good work by Lili Darvas, Gaby Rodgers, Peter Brandon, Jack Bittner and an English newcomer named David King-Wood. "The Hidden River" isn't a cheering play and it is far from completely satisfying in its action and ideas, but its concern with a painful subject is inescapably stimulating.

New York World-Telegram and The Sun

January 24, 1957

Stormy Stretch on the River

By TOM DONNELLY.

In its best scenes, "The Hidden River" (at the Playhouse) is a bang-up melodrama, craftily exploiting what have become largely neglected theatrical principles. It offers strong characters in the grip of strong emotions.

The Storm Jameson novel which serves as the basis for the play was a natural for conversion to the footlights, since just as it stands it contains a lot of built-in climaxes, with plenty of old-fashioned steam and conflict. On the whole, playwrights Ruth and Augustus Goetz have made the most of their opportunity.

The plot is certainly a simple affair, about as basic as "Who Killed Cock Robin?" The curtain rises on a manor house on the banks of the Loire River, in France. Time: 1950. There is a buzz of exposition, as we are introduced to the characters, and they go on at some length, filling us in on events of the past, and establishing certain intricate family relationships. ("But, Marie, you are more than an aunt to that orphaned girl. You are like a mother to her." Quite a lot of that sort of thing.)

A Collaborationist Comes Home.

As the dust settles, it is made clear that the household is preparing to receive Daniel Monnerie, the disgraced uncle to Jean and Francis. Daniel has been in prison for four years for the crime of collaborating with the enemy.

It is Marie Regnier, formerly Daniel's mistress, who alone of all those concerned cannot accept his reappearance with even a thin degree of tolerance. Marie looks upon Daniel now with loathing, since she is convinced that he was responsible for the death of her son, Robert, who was killed by the Germans when he was revealed to them as a prime mover in the Resistance.

After its labored start "The Hidden River" gets down to some excellent business. The principal persons of the play are limned in bold, broad strokes, but they are able to express themselves with vigor and intelligence on the special aspects of guilt and survival as they figure in war and its aftermath.

Daniel is, in particular, a fresh and fascinating sketch, at least in terms of what is usual in the theater. He is the elegant, worldly man who saw no reason for not renewing an old friendship with a Nazi general at the height of the hostilities, and discussing with him various cultural matters in an easy prewar manner. "I behaved like a rational being when no one else did," he says, without apology.

Marie, the bereaved mother, is a symbol of implacable hatred, and if she becomes a trifle monotonous in her lust for vengeance, she is nevertheless a forceful spokesman for an attitude which must surely persist in a Europe where the scars of war are still all too painfully visible.

With Storm and Blast.

As it goes thundering along, with the involved parties confronting one another with storm and blast, and with Francis at last emerging in his evil colors to the consternation of one and all, "The Hidden River" shapes up as a sufficiently bountiful display of emotional fireworks.

There is no great depth here, to be sure, and the machinery creaks now and again, but the Goetzes have turned out an entertainment that satisfies in the way a soundly constructed murder thriller can satisfy. Possibly that's a too-frivolous comparison, but it's the one that comes to mind.

Dennis King has a fine, flashy role to play as Daniel, and he plays it brilliantly. Lili Darvas is excellent as the wrought-up Marie, Peter Brandon is fine as the guileful Francis, and most of the supporting artists are OK. Robert Preston, ordinarily a prime favorite of mine, seems miscast as Jean, the ostensible hero of the drama.

Daily Mirror
January 24, 1957

Robert Coleman's THEATRE:

'Hidden River' Falls Apart at the End

• Subject of collaboration appears to be a bit shopworn.

"The Hidden River" doesn't hide its secret long enough. Early in the second act, we began to be reasonably sure of the identity of the traitor in the Monnerie household. We kept wondering why it took those on stage such a lengthy span it ferret him out.

IT SEEMS THAT during World War II the infamous fellow had turned in a pal to the Nazis. He sacrificed his friend, who was helping British flyers shot down over France to escape, in order to save his family's vineyard. To avoid detection over the years, he'd been intimating that an uncle might be the villain.

The uncle was a miguided philosopher, who thought that culture transcends boundaries. He had been condemned to imprisonment for entertaining a "civilized" invading general, whom he had met at Heidelberg. Though the motives for his action may have been erroneous, he was willing to pay the piper.

But we're not going to tell you more about "The Hidden River's" complications, for it would lessen what suspense there is for those readers who may choose to see it at the Playhouse. They'll just have to be their own detectives. Suffice it to say that the criminal is left to live with his uneasy conscience.

RUTH AND AUGUSTUS Goetz have based the new arrival on a novel by Storm Jameson. They have done a workmanlike job. But we wonder if the subject of collaboration isn't a bit shopworn. The French, after liberation, passed and executed judgment on those guilty of aiding and abetting the enemy.

The facts were exhaustively reported in the press at war's end, and learned scholars wrote many monographs on the subject. Some day a dramaturgic genius may give us a truly searching and rewarding play about the problem. We regret to say that the Goetz's venture is on the shallow side.

Martin Gabel and Henry Margolis have given the entry an excellent cast. That wonderful scene stealer, Dennis King, is up to his old tricks again as an urbane "collaborationist." King makes the muddled intellectual quite understandable, if not acceptable.

ROBERT PRESTON, a versatile and knowing actor, brings dramatic strength to the proceedings. His portrait of a perplexed elder brother is compassionate and honest. Peter Brandon, in our opinion, is the weak link in the melodrama. His histrionics, due perhaps to the faulty direction of Robert Lewis, are unconvincing.

Lili Darvas, Gaby Rodgers, David King-Wood, Tonio Selwart, Roger DeKoven and Jack Bittner do their best by other roles. Lewis, usually a master at staging comedies or dramas, appears to have lost his magic touch in this instance. His guidance is of little help to the company and script.

Stewart Chaney has designed an attractive replica of a manor house on the banks of the Loire.

"THE HIDDEN RIVER" flowed interestingly along for a canto and a half. It seemed to be that rare combination of whodunit and character study. Then it fell apart. For the remainder of the journey, it overflowed its banks. What promised to be a welcome hit went amiss.

The New York Times
January 24, 1957

Theatre: 'The Hidden River' Opens

The Goetzes' Drama at the Playhouse

By BROOKS ATKINSON

WITH the assistance of a finely attuned cast, Ruth and Augustus Goetz have written a vivid drama. "The Hidden River," which opened at The Playhouse last evening.

Technically it is a mystery melodrama, concerned with identifying the betrayer of a man killed before the play opens. But "The Hidden River," based on a novel by Storm Jameson, is set in the Loire country of France in 1950. And Robert, the man who was killed, was head of a wartime organization that was spiriting Allied fliers out of France under the noses of the enemy. The man who betrayed Robert must therefore have been a collaborator, and is not to be trusted today.

This puts a different connotation on the mystery melodrama formula. It involves discussions of the nature of guilt, and some general statements about the morality of war. In "The River Line," which was produced earlier this season, Charles Morgan discussed the philosophy of violence in the modern world on the basis of a similar wartime operation. A subtle thinker and a fastidious writer, Mr. Morgan got deeper into the subject than Mr. and Mrs. Goetz do.

"The River Line" was essentially a library drama. In "The Hidden River" Mr. and Mrs. Goetz are practical stage writers. There may be a few moments in their play when you feel that showmanship is taking advantage of drama—especially that scene in which two distraught characters keep on talking to a man who is obviously dead.

But the great bulk of the play is dramatically effective and thoroughly absorbing. The characters are full-blooded human beings with passionate convictions and strong feelings. So well has the performance been staged by Robert Lewis, and so vigorously are the parts acted, that the characters cannot be separated from the actors.

There is Robert Preston's characterization of the older of two brothers who operate the family vineyard—a goodhearted though vehement and merciless man when his loyalties are affected. There is Lili Darvas' lean, bitter, high-strung mother of the man who was killed. There is Dennis King's fluent, weary uncle who has been jailed for collaborating with the enemy. There is Peter Brandon's facile, charmingly irresponsible younger brother who operated a secret printing press in Paris during the war.

These are the principal actors caught up in a tightly knit, swift-paced performance. But there are others equally telling in their own right—David King-Wood as a tenacious seeker for justice from England; Gaby Rodgers as a slightly fey, uncertain fiancée of the younger brother; Jack Bittner as a conscientious priest; Tonio Selwart as a cultivated German general who appears in a ghostly scene; Roger DeKoven as a sanctimoniously patriotic physician; Margot Lassner in the brief part of a household servant.

Since "The Hidden River" has the basic form of a mystery melodrama, it would not be fair to go into detail here about the development of the plot. But the plot is an intricate one that Mr. and Mrs. Goetz have handled like craftsmen. Stewart Chaney has housed the drama in an inviting setting that portrays a comfortable, venerable river manor, slightly ominous in its use of light and shade.

Out of acrid memories of the war, out of post-war suspicions and hatreds, Mr. and Mrs. Goetz have put together a vivid play. The writing is skillful and the performance is superb.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune
January 24, 1957

THEATER

'The Hidden River'

By Paul V. Beckley

Out of the problems of loyalty and betrayal in our time Ruth and Augustus Goetz have written a driving, biting, stinging whiplash of a play. They have probed the levels of indifference and guut and hate and gouged out a large-sized piece of theater. There may be in it a message, an underlying instruction concerning the confines of disloyalty, but above all it is a stirring drama.

It is not a play of simple or similar people but has range in its characterizations. Its characters have deep inner conflicts, but they are not analyzed and cored and peeled in the psychiatric fashion; they divulge their griefs and pains and horrors in the open arena of the stage, learning by a chance meeting six years back or the disappointed confession of a dying man the definitions of themselves and those around them.

It all takes place during twenty-four hours in a quiet French house on the Loire when an Englishman returns to visit the family that sheltered him during the desperate days of the war. His return coincides with the return from prison of the eldest member of the family, who was locked away five years for continuing during war time an old friendship with a German general as intellectual if not as completely immured in the peaceful pre-war world as he.

Behind everybody and every action stands the figure of a resistance leader, Robert, who was captured at Orleans in 1944 and tortured to death by the invaders. He peers out of the grief-pained eyes of his mother, the guilt-clouded vision of the senior brother of the house and the Englishman who counts him a friend. All of these people are driven by an anguished need to identfy his betrayer.

But it is not merely a mystery, as intriguing as that element may appear, for one is not too deeply into the first act before it is abvious who bears the guilt. The drama lies in the effect on these survivors, each with his varying degree of involvement, as the identification becomes clear to each.

Lili Darvas gives one of the finer performances of the season as the bitter mother of the slain man. With the turn of her head she manages to breathe a hatred that verges on the poisonous, and when she crumbles her handkerchief and between hissing intakes of breath cross-examines the dying man, once her lover, to obtain the identification which of all those possible must hurt her most, she has every one in the audience straining with her.

Dennis King is magnificently urbane as the imprisoned uncle, returned to die in the home which for him is still a symbol of the quieter and finer world now gone. He misses no nuance in his gradual bereavement at finding himself forced to discover to Miss Darvas not only the bitter identity but also his unintentional guilt.

Robert Preston makes very real the struggle between honesty and mercy that eventually forces him, too, to make a bitter choice. David King-Wood is fine as the Englishman, Gaby Rodgers delightful as the betrothed girl whose parents were shot in the Strasbourg she never wants to see again, since it could mean merely "looking for bones." And Peter Brandon gives a remarkable performance as the simpering, cowering, retreating, swerving Francis.

• • •

There is a message: that disloyalty might conceivably be forgiven when it betrayed a nation, for that could be to some too abstract a thing to cope with, but when it betrays a friend, what conscience below that of the "gentle Jesus" could forgive it. But the message does not detract. No one need fear that any preachment will distract from the unswerving excitement of the play.

"Measure for Measure"

Daily Mirror
January 23, 1957

Robert Coleman's ***THEATRE:***

The Bard Triumphs At the Phoenix

• 'Measure for Measure' in modern dress done with telling effect

"Measure For Measure" is one of William Shakespeare's most provocative plays. Many commentators on the Elizabethan theatre view it with disfavor, and some even refuse to admit that the Bard authored all of it. Why, we cannot understand. Mocking and cynical it is, to be sure, but vastly amusing.

• • •

WHEN HE PENNED IT, Master Will was not exactly in love with hypocritical reformers. So, through the character of that uncompromising Angelo, for whom virtue was but a mask, he spanked the breed with a welt-raising bastinado. As did Ludwig Thom's "Moral," John Colton and Clemence Randolph's "Rain" in our century.

"Measure for Measure" has been variously described as a comedy, a tragicomedy and a tragedy. It's a bit of all three. And it's a masterpiece, in our book, for all its faults. It is so contemporary that it can be staged in semi-modern dress, with telling effect.

In fact, it is being presented just that way at the Phoenix by the American Shakespeare Festival Theatre, under the imaginative direction of John Houseman. This is the revival that won critical acclaim at that worthy organization's beautiful playhouse in Stratford, Conn., last Summer.

ARNOLD MOSS, OF the resonant voice, is excellent as the compassionate Duke of Vienna who takes a holiday from his duties, the better to study his people. A ruler right out of "The Arabian Nights." Richard Waring is so accurate as the narrow-minded Angelo, to whom the Duke deputizes his authority, as to make one want to hiss him.

Nina Foch is a lovely and sensitive Isabella, who can only save her brother's life by appeasing the desires of the austere but lecherous Angelo. Richard Easton and Jacqueline Brookes, two of our more youthful and gifted Shakespearean interpreters, are admirable as the causes of her dilemma.

The versatile Hiram Sherman is wonderful, as usual, as a simple-minded, well-meaning bawdmaster. Norman Lloyd contributes a fascinatingly stylized portrait of a sly and treacherous Viennese "fixer." Salutes are also due Nancy Wickwire, Leon Janney and Morris Carnovsky for their characterizations.

"MEASURE FOR MEASURE" is offered against a series of towering Venetian blinds. With the addition of a handful of props, these backgrounds suggest a court, prison or what-have-you in the blink of an eye. They provide fluidity of movement for a sar-

"MEASURE FOR MEASURE"

Play by William Shakespeare; staged by John Houseman and Jack Landau; settings and costumes by Rouben Ter-Arutunian; lighting by Virgil Thomson; revived by the American Shakespeare Festival Theatre and Academy; presented by T. Edward Hambleton and Norris Houghton at the Phoenix Theatre, January 22, 1957. The cast:

Duke of Vienna.... Arnold Moss
Escalus..... Powys Thomas
Angelo..... Richard Waring
Friar Peter..... Patrick Hines
Mistress Overdone.....
Gertrude Kinnell
Pompey..... Hiram Sherman
Lucio..... Norman Lloyd
1st Gentleman... Mitchell Agruss
2nd Gentleman.. Tucker Ashworth
Provost..... Morris Carnovsky
Claudio..... Richard Easton
Juliet..... Jacqueline Brooks
Isabella..... Nina Foch
Francisca.... Pamela Saunders
Elbow..... Leon Janney
Froth..... Ellis Rabb
Mariana..... Nancy Wickwire
A Boy..... Brian Desmond
Abhorson..... William Cottrell
Barnadine..... Jerru Stiller

donic cavalcade of human nobility and depravity.

We suspect our late good friend, Damon Runyon, would have relished this raffish version of "Measure for Measure."

He would probably have recognized a number of familiar faces in this dip into a timeless underworld. Costumes may change, but motivations and behavior, never.

Take our advice, and buy your tickets immediately for Will Shakespeare's brilliant and salty satire on two-faced do-gooders. We trust you will get as much fun from it as we did. There was only one Shakespeare, and you won't find the equal of "Measure For Measure" hereabouts for the rest of this season. Another triumph for the Phoenix.

New York World-Telegram
and
The Sun

January 23, 1957

A Neat Measure Of Fun and Games

By TOM DONNELLY.

The American Shakespeare Festival Theater and Academy production of "Measure for Measure" (at the Phoenix) adds up to a pleasant evening. The physical production is attractive, the acting is generally good, and co-directors John Houseman and Jack Landau have succeeded in imposing a smooth, graceful discipline on one of Shakespeare's more wayward manuscripts.

I seem to have spent rather a lot of time this season making gingerly attempts to suggest the content of the Bard's less familiar works.

Well, now, "Measure for Measure" takes place in Vienna, and it begins as Vincentio, the duke of the realm, announces that he is about to embark on a little journey out of town. He appoints Angelo, a man of implacable severity, as his deputy, with full powers to straighten out the tangled morals of the local citizens during his absence.

Angelo Is Busy, Busy, Busy.

Angelo falls to with a will, closing brothels right and left, and arresting people for the crime of incontinence. One of the first offenders to be tossed in the lock-up is Claudio, a rake about town who draws the death sentence because he has neglected to marry his expectant fiancee.

Claudio's sister, Isabella, an apprentice nun, leaves her convent and pleads with Angelo for her brother's life. Angelo, ablaze with sudden lust, offers to spare Claudio if Isabella will abandon her chastity.

Isabella prefers her brother's death to her own dishonor, and she is so smugly righteous in arriving at this decision that there may be a few spectators who will regard her as a pretty cold fish for a heroine.

Plot and Counterplot.

But all is not lost. The duke, having disguised himself as a friar, the better to move about among the people and take frank first-hand opinion polls, settles the hash of all concerned.

There are simulated executions, last-minute reprieves, the substitution of one veiled lady for another in a midnight tryst, intrigues and counter-intrigues, and, at last, a cloudburst of happy endings, arrived at with a wild disregard for probability that Laura Jean Libby never touched in her palmiest days.

The last time I saw "Measure for Measure" (performed (at the Stratford Festival up in Canada) it was done as a somber, passionate melodrama, and that approach worked very well, considering the peculiarites of the piece.

The "Measure for Measure" at the Phoenix is cast in a lighter mould. The setting is vaguely Edwardian, as in the Old Vic's considerably more glittering assault on "Troilus and Cressida." The key scenes are performed with a wide-open eye for their comic possibilities, although a certain inherent gravity is allowed to assert itself, and all of the minor episodes, involving the openly disreputable figures of the town, are made to look and sound as if they were gleanings from "The Beggar's Opera."

Relaxing and Pleasant.

The ultimate effect is not one of dazzling hilarity, and, indeed, there is no single strong effect on any level. And yet, in a mild, relaxed fashion that I found agreeable, this "Measure for Measure" does flow along nicely, and I think it must be accounted a successful enterprise.

(As I see it, this play has no organic life of its own. It is an oddly shaped and virtually transparent vessel, ready to accept a wide variety of colorations at the discretion of its interpreters.)

Of the actors assembled for the Phoenix revival, Arnold Moss is certainly the most accomplished. His meddling duke is a stylish creation, whimsical, sly and full of pepper, Richard Waring's Angelo is sufficiently dark and forceful for this operetta-like version of the dire doings in old Vienna, Nina Foch is a handsome forthright Isabella, and Hiram Sherman, Richard Easton, Morris Carnovsky and most of the supporting artists are up to the mark.

The scenic design, by Rouben Ter-Arutunian, calls for a vast upward expanse of gray slats, suggesting a forest of Venetian blinds. Odd, but effective.

Special Rate for Microfilm

1940 - 1941 - 1942 - 1943 - 1944 - 1945 - 1946 - 1947 - 1948
1949 - 1950 - 1951 - 1952 - 1953 - 1954 - 1955

Sixteen Years on Microfilm

Many university and college drama departments are anxious to have additional copies of the critics' reviews to enable more than one student to study the same review or reviews. These are now available. The complete sixteen year set, 1940 through 1955, on two Eastman Kodak 35mm rolls. Most university and college libraries and many of the larger public libraries are equipped with readers or viewers of this film.

You may order as many as you wish. The rate is $25.00 per set to any of our subscribers. The rate to non-subscribers is $100. per set.

New York Post

January 23, 1957

By Richard Watts Jr.

A Brilliant 'Measure for Measure'

The American Shakespeare Festival production of "Measure for Measure" was delightful when done in Stratford, Conn., last summer, but it is even better now. As presented locally for the first time at the Phoenix Theater last night, the entire performance has been tightened and strengthened, the style and pace are more deft, and the acting seems more sure and resourceful. The result is thoroughly brilliant entertainment, humorous, cynical, ironic and brightly bawdy, and one of the finest, freshest and most imaginative presentations of the Bard in recent theatrical history.

This is, among other things, a production that beats the Old Vic's prankish staging of "Troilus and Cressida" at its own game. John Houseman and Jack Landau, the directors, have taken Shakespeare's word that the scene of "Measure for Measure" is Vienna, and they have costumed it and given it a setting that I suppose one could call Franz-Josefian. A Viennese operetta seems always around the corner, but the liberation of spirit thus provided for the actors has not made them inarticulate, as happened with the Old Vic, but seems to have given them added ease and assurance.

"Measure for Measure" is one of the bitterest of Shakespeare's comedies, and, in some ways, one of the most cryptic. It is perhaps true that, by staging it as a farce, the Messrs. Houseman and Landau have sacrificed some of the sullen contempt for mankind that is in it. But the cynicism, the mockery, the sex rowdiness and the remarkable modernity of its spirit are still there. If you doubt the modernity, look at the scene in which Isabella refuses to sleep with Claudio to save her brother's life and watch how the Bard declines to see her refusal as any triumph of nobility.

It is true that the play appears to have a conventional happy ending, but the very way in which it is tossed at the audience almost contemptuously indicates in itself that this is no comedy of romantic good will. As for the Duke, presumably a sympathetic character, his tricky deviousness and sadistic humor make him a most uningratiating hero, actually a less human figure than the villainous Angelo, the puritanical deputy trapped in his sex urges, who might almost be described as an Elizabethan Rev. Davidson in the Bard's own version of "Rain."

Without more than a slight underemphasis on the basic bitterness of the comedy, the current production makes "Measure for Measure" richly comic and wonderfully entertaining. Some superbly humorous characters of a frankly deplorable nature move hilariously through the background, and you won't find many more enjoyable clowns than Norman Lloyd's vicious but uproariously disreputable Lucio, Hiram Sherman's gaily and candidly bawdy Pompey, and, in one brief scene, Jerry Stiller's drunken Barnadine, a felon who loftily refuses to let himself be executed.

All of the central roles are splendidly managed, too. Although he is playing an unpleasant man, Arnold Moss, one of the best of American Shakespeareans, makes the Duke humorous and perversely engaging. Nina Foch as Isabella, Richard Waring as Angelo, Richard Easton as the doomed brother, and Morris Carnovsky as the honest Provost are also especially good, and so are Nancy Wickwire, Leon Janney, Powys Thomas and Patrick Hines in smaller parts. Rouben Ter-Arutunian's setting is likewise excellent. This "Measure for Measure" is a triumph for everyone concerned.

The New York Times

January 23, 1957

Theatre: 'Measure for Measure' at the Phoenix

Connecticut Company Presents Comedy

By BROOKS ATKINSON

GOTHAMITES who were too indolent to go to Stratford, Conn., last summer now have a second chance. The excellent "Measure for Measure" that inaugurated last year's festival has come to the Phoenix, where it opened last evening.

Most of the actors are the same, although Whitford Kane, the lovable Shakespearean rogue, has left this world forever and is sorely missed for a thousand reasons. Among the new actors, Richard Waring brings us a rigid, inscrutable Angelo that could hardly be improved upon. And Nancy Wickwire's Mariana has loveliness and style.

•

Things being as they are today, we are not likely to have a better "Measure for Measure" in the foreseeable future. For John Houseman and Jack Landau, who staged it, have found a number of ways to make it witty and pertinent and also acceptable to audiences of today.

It is done in twentieth-century dress. Perhaps "Edwardian" is the generic word. It is also done inside brilliant scenery designed by Reuben Ter-Arutunian as if he were establishing a fresh tradition. He has masked the inside of the stage with a series of lattices that take light and let light through and give an effect of neutral modernism. Using steps that lead to the orchestra pit, the directors have deployed their performance through this reticent scenery with speed, decision and spontaneity.

To see this production a second time is to have a particular appreciation of the skill of the staging. For "Measure for Measure" is not an ingratiating comedy. Written in a low key it has a sullen attitude towards the world and it manages to outrage modern ethics on several occasions.

But Mr. Houseman and Mr. Landau have created a giddy world in which the ethics are not of serious concern and they have found abundant humor in the outskirts of the play. If you think that Shakespeare is objectionably callous when he requires the executioner to cut off a head and deliver it to Angelo, note the improvisation that makes it a humorous episode in this production. A wink from Morris Carnovsky, as the executioner, and the deed is merrily done.

In the modernized "Troilus and Cressida," which the Old Vic presented this season, the literary style fought the production. There are some shiftless moments in this "Measure for Measure" when Shakespeare and the actors are trying to nail down the exposition. But once the story gets under way, the dialogue seems pithy and relevant, and the play goes with a skip and a hop through a lively evening.

Acting and Production Provide Lively Fare

The acting has remarkable buoyancy, beginning with Arnold Moss' neatly sardonic duke—a stuffy role if there ever was one. In Norman Lloyd's hands, the part of Lucio becomes an elegant Sportin' Life. Hiram Sherman turns the tapster into a cherubic rogue. Even Elbow, the illiterate constable, is both funny and reasonable in Leon Janney's cheerful acting.

Nina Foch and Jacqueline Brookes are repeating their charming performances of Isabella and Juliet, respectively. Gertrude Kinnell contributes a blowzy Mistress Overdone that makes the profession of bawd both comic and traditional.

The journey from Stratford, Conn., to Second Avenue has been a happy one. "Measure for Measure" never had it so good.

Journal American
January 23, 1957

Fine Company Effective in Bard's Comedy

By JOHN McCLAIN

THERE IS A STRONG similarity between Shakespeare's "Measure for Measure" as presented by the American Shakespeare Festival Company, and "Troilus and Cressida," as presented by the Old Vic company uptown a few weeks ago. Both are in semi-modern dress, the plays themselves combine the same robust regard for life and lust, and in neither are there arrayed any characters of true heroic stature.

This is not to suggest that John Houseman, who put "Measure for Measure" together for the Stratford-in-Connecticut season last Summer, had been guilty of cribbing from the folks from the Old Country; but it does imply that if these less-known plays by Uncle Willie are to be done at all it is advisable that they be souped-up by all the liberties of costume and direction that an ingenious impressario can give them. Which is exactly what both companies succeeded in doing.

In the offering at the Phoenix last night there was the added advantage of a remarkably glittering cast, some exceptionally stark and impressive sets by Rouben Ter-Arutunian and appealing incidental music by Virgil Thomson. It is doubtful that we will see this obscure bit of Shakespeare as well presented in our time.

Written Hastily

For it is obscure Shakespeare, and deserves to be. "Measure for Measure" is a rather Hogarthian conception, probably written to make a fast shilling while more portentous works were in the oven. The characters never rise to any great heights of nobility, many of the situations are pedestrian Shakespeare (which he used until frayed at the edges), and the speech only occasionally reaches moments of notable poetry.

The Bard, when he was trying, always succeeded in creating one memorable figure, but in this he has none. The best he can do is give us a sometimes silly conflict between a gentleman who has lost control of his passion and a young lady who is overwhelmingly in possession of hers.

The brightest moment in the evening came, I thought, when the dedicated lady told her brother that, happily, he would be permitted to lay down his life to protect her virtue. The brother, less spiritual, gives a Shakespearean double-take and says the equivalent of, "Oh, yeah?"

However trivial in contrast with the more popular classics, this is still a production of boundless energy and authority. In the large cast there are rewarding performances by Richard Waring, as Angelo; Arnold Moss, as the Duke of Vienna; Hiram Sherman, as Pompey; Nina Foch, as Isabella; Morris Carnovsky as the Provost; Richard Easton, as Claudio; Nancy Wickwire, as Mariana; Jacqueline Brookes, as Juliet; Leon Janney, as Elbow; Norman Lloyd, as Lucio and William Cottrell, as Abhorson, the executioner.

Even Shakespeare may be permitted to have written below his best on occasion, and this would seem to be one of those times. Nevertheless he was incapable of mediocrity, and when this play comes to life, as it does frequently, it is given expert and enthusiastic consideration by this company at the Phoenix.

DAILY NEWS
January 23, 1957

Bard Has 'Em Howling In Romp at Phoenix

By CHARLES McHARRY

Will Shakespeare's version of "Guys and Dolls" opened at the Phoenix Theatre last night. Titled "Boys and Bawds"—and somewhat better known as "Measure for Measure" — the production was a lusty, busty, howling success in every department.

A hooray is hereby accorded the visiting troupe from the American Shakespeare Theatre and Academy, of Stratford, Conn., and to the group's directors, John Houseman and Jack Landau. Credit also is due the Phoenix, which hasn't been too lucky with earlier offerings this season, for arranging the import.

Nobody Snoozed

The Bard had the gloves off when he wrote "Measure" and the Nutmeggers play it sans gloves and restraint of any kind. It zips through three acts in no time at all. I couldn't detect a single snore in the house last night, and this, kids, is a rarity, both for Shakespeare and the Phoenix.

Fine performances were two for a nickel. Arnold Moss was completely in charge of audience and actors as the Duke of Vienna. Richard Waring as the Duke's hyprocritical deputy was a beauty of a villain. Nina Foch made a beauty of a beauty and so did Jacqueline Brooks and Nancy Wickwire.

Let's be fair to this remarkable assemblage of players and name them all. On the featured list were Powys Thomas, Patrick Hines, Gertrude Kinnell, Hiram Sherman, Norman Lloyd, Morris Carnovsky, Richard Easton, Pamela Saunders, Leon Janney, Ellis Rabb and William Cottrell. Not a dullard in the lot.

Oh, that Deputy Duke

"Measure for Measure," in case you're rusty on the story, is about a vice cleanup in old Vienna. Shakespeare set it in the Vienna of his time, but the Stratford gang move it ahead a couple of centuries, when things were still popping on the Danube.

The Duke is dismayed at the way things are going and decides to tidy up. He's also suspicious of his vice squad, so he ostensibly takes off on vacation, putting deputy Richard Waring in charge and ordering him to use the broom.

Right away Waring locks up a youth on a lechery charge. In those days the count meant getting a girl with child. The penalty, although it hadn't been enforced during the Duke's rule, was the chopping block. The prisoner's sister intervenes and the Deputy Duke propositions her.

Sis in Trouble

It's going to be little sister's honor or big brother's head and things look dark, but the old Duke is pussyfooting around in disguise and before you know it the Deputy Duke's got his desserts and all the right guys get the right girls.

It's a romp from the beginning, beautifully staged and lighted. Yep, the Phoenix has a winner this time, even though it will be around only four weeks. Better hurry on down to Second Ave. and 12th St. and join the fun.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

January 23, 1957

'Measure for Measure' Is Presented at the Phoenix

By Paul V. Beckley

The American Shakespeare Festival Theater brought last summer's "Measure for Measure" down from its Stratford, Conn., theater to the Phoenix Tuesday night for a four-week run, a fact that should please a good many who may not have commuted north to see it. For this is a sometimes elegant, sometimes rowdy, but by and large robust "Measure for Measure." If it has more than a touch of Hogarth and even a daub of "Frankie and Johnny" about it, it has, too, a fine feeling for some of the most searching of the bard's poetry.

John Houseman's direction has put knowing touches in the bawdier ensembles, a hoyden fondling her tired feet or a squeal from somebody in the crowd to emphasize a point in a line, but it has also concentrated with fine effect on Angelo's soul-searching as he feels his way from table to chair back after Isabella's mention of a bribe first sets temptation afire in his mind.

The costuming in the fashion of—well, it is difficult to be precise, but one might set it somewhere in the late eighteenth or even early nineteenth century—does not detract from the sense of nonsense of the play. If anything, it is just remote enough to make the nonsense more plausible and near enough to make the sense sharper.

In the matter of sets, there is an ingeniousness that is admirable. By means of a dozen or so strips of hanging slats like gigantic Venetian blinds, which can be raised or lowered singly, in pairs, or all across the back of the stage, the scenes are shifted from jail to palace with economy and dispatch.

After playing their parts last summer at Stratford, the actors could be expected to have gotten everything smoothed and polished, but even when expecting this, one is impressed by just how polished they have managed to be without blunting any of the sharpness of the lines. Richard Waring is new to the difficult role of Angelo but he plays it nevertheless with an insight that is splendid to watch. It is not easy to make the inconsistent Angelo ring true, but Mr. Waring has done as much.

Richard Easton is really fine in the jail scene when his sister explains why he should accept his death like a gentleman. He, too, is new to the part. Nancy Wickwire is likewise new in the role of Mariana, and a winsome Mariana she is, indeed. As to Nina Foch as Isabella, Arnold Moss as the Duke, Hiram Sherman as Pompey, Morris Carnovsky as the Provost, or Norman Lloyd as Lucio, little more could be asked of any of them. To give their roles such finish and yet such enthusiasm is all that could be asked of any actors.

"Waiting for Godot"

The New York Times

January 22, 1957

Theatre: 'Godot' Is Back

Beckett Play Staged With Negro Cast

By BROOKS ATKINSON

SEVEN months having gone by with no "Waiting for Godot" anywhere in sight, Michael Meyerberg has taken appropriate action. He has produced it again, this time with Negro actors at the Ethel Barrymore, where it opened last evening.

Although the current version seems lively through the first act, it seems tedious in the second. Since no one knows what Samuel Beckett's rigadoon means, one should not say that the new version misinterprets the theme. Obviously, a play has to be understood before the actors can be suspected of having muddled it.

●

But something of that sort is going to be suggested here. "Waiting for Godot" is not so much of a minstrel show as it has become in Herbert Berghof's new style of direction. The actors are good enough in their own right. Mantan Moreland, who plays Gogo, has all the mournful humors of the traditional Negro vaudeville actor—a suspicious, joyousness of manner, a crack-voiced laugh, a teetery walk, a general feeling that he is the one who is going to be slapped.

Since he is short and stubby, he is a comic-looking figure in the company of Earle Hyman, who is tall and skinny and plays Didi. Mr. Hyman's characterization is that of an egg-head—the intellectual, the dilettante, the man of words. In the midst of the squalor of the play, he introduces the occasional mystic ideas that give "Waiting for Godot" a suspicion of meaning. Mr. Hyman is an excellent actor who knows how to speak a sentence. There are quite a lot of sentences in Mr. Beckett's lugubrious play.

●

Rex Ingram, powerful and hearty, plays the cruel Pozzo, the man with the whip and the contempt for weak people. Mr. Ingram gives a first-rate performance in the first act when Pozzo is on top of the world. But he is relatively ineffectual in the sprawling second act, which Mr. Berghof seems not to have whipped into dramatic shape.

As Lucky, the craven slave, Geoffrey Holder, a professional dancer, is macabre and vivid until he begins to speak. For some reason hard to understand he reads his long speech at the end of the first act as gibberish, although Mr. Beckett is suspected of having slipped some portentous symbolism into that tirade. The little boy who appears at the end of each act is played with affecting simplicity by Bert Chamberlain.

●

Throughout the animated first act, Mr. Moreland and Mr. Hyman put on a funny show. That would seem to be a consummation devoutly to be wished, for Mr. Beckett needs actors. But we can learn this much about his play from its second production: "Waiting for Godot" cannot be laughed off. In some elusive fashion it is concerned with the suffering of mankind. It is more of a dirge than a vaudeville turn. Salvation is not going to come, in Mr. Beckett's opinion.

Mr. Meyerberg is so infatuated with "Waiting for Godot" that he threatens to produce it year after year in different interpretations. Mike, please!

"WAITING FOR GODOT"

Play in two acts by Samuel Beckett; staged by Herbert Berghof; settings by Louis Kennel; costumes by Stanley Simmons; presented by Michael Meyerberg at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre, January 21, 1957. The cast:

Estragon (Gogo)..Manton Moreland
Vladimir (Dddi)

Valdimir (Didi)....Earle Hyman
Lucky.....Geoffrey Holder
Pozzo.....Rex Ingram
A Boy.....Bert Chamberlain

NEW YORK Herald Tribune
January 22, 1957

THEATER

'Waiting for Godot'

By WALTER KERR

Shortly after "Waiting for Godot" was first performed here I had a letter—from some one who admired it rather more ardently than I did—complaining that comedian Bert Lahr had somewhat injured the play's purity by making it both human and funny.

In the all-Negro version which appeared at the Ethel Barrymore last evening a couple of engaging performers are doing what further damage they can to it. A fellow named Mantan Moreland, for instance, eases onto the near-empty stage with an ice-skater's shuffle and a misanthropist's eyes. He is playing Gogo, that tramp who is never permitted to sleep for more than sixty consecutive seconds, and he has the right shrug for the part.

When some one convinces him that he is absolutely happy he can turn his baleful glare upon them, purse his skeptical lips and inquire, "What do we do now that we're happy?" in a morose inflection that wipes happiness off the face of the earth. He has the perfect resignation of the true contemplative, too. Accused of forgetting something, he absolves himself with a philosophical "That's the way I am—I forget immediately or I never forget," and the issue is settled eternally

• • •

With his fidgety feet working this way and that, his expectant finger-tips testing the vacant air, and the points of his collar turned up under his chin like the petals of a discouraged buttercup, Mr. Moreland puts an emphatic period to almost any discussion author Samuel Beckett cares to try on for size. I don't want to suggest that you're going to find Bert Lahr's brilliance reincarnated here—the mystical delight in crunchy vegetables and the sudden intuitive terrors are among the things missing—but Mr. Moreland knows when a bit of amiable soft-shoe is in order.

• • •

Earle Hyman, excellent actor that he is, finds a few brooding shadows to go with the morose meanderings of a man who is "appalled" at the fact that the longed-for Godot neither comes nor sends clear messages. Rex Ingram is, if anything, more comfortable in the boots, fur collar, and coachman's top hat of the slave-driving Pozzo than predecessor Kurt Kasznar was (though isn't it time we all admitted that this blustering tyrant is the one indefatigable bore in Mr. Beckett's gallery?). And the climactic fountain of deliberate gibberish that pours from Geoffrey Holder's lanky and strangulated Lucky is the evening's single most decisive success.

As Mr. Holder writhes in agony to set the rusty machinery of his 'mind' going, as he bashes at his temples, as he triumphantly unlocks the door of his brain only to let loose a cyclonic barrage of unreason, the bitter and mocking image of all human thought processes leaps into paralyzing focus.

It also, and I think quite consciously, touches the core of the play. It is Mr. Beckett's method to slash sharply against the grain of anything that is growing, moving in a direction, achieving what we choose to call rational sequence. "What is terrible is to have thought," murmurs one of the disconsolate tramps, perhaps remembering Lucky. "We could have done without it," he concludes, looking pensively into the void—where a broken gramophone needle rotates forever. When "Godot" gets its 'pure' production, we shall see only the void and hear nothing but the needle.

I suspect, however, that that perfect mounting is still a long way off. Most actors are human beings, and it gets in the way.

New York Post
January 22, 1957

By Richard Watts Jr.

A Revival of 'Waiting for Godot'

The fascinating dramatic enigma which is Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot" was revived last night at the Ethel Barrymore Theater with a Negro cast, and, while I don't think the new production has the dynamic excitement of the original local presentation a season ago, this odd and haunting play continues to exert much of its curiously provocative spell. Even when not as brilliantly done as it was, Mr. Beckett's pessimistic parable remains one of the notable works of the modern drama.

What I missed chiefly last night was Bert Lahr. It isn't that Mantan Moreland fails to be humorous and engaging as the less philosophical of the play's pair of symbolic tramps. It is merely that Mr. Lahr, in addition to being enormously funny and touching in the role, somehow managed to seem a kind of liaison officer between the narrative and the audience, a sort of spiritual interpreter, whose warmth and humanity extended across the footlights and caught up every spectator in a shared experience.

As it is currently played, the central figure is the philosophical Didi rather than the instinctive Gogo, and the role is admirably portrayed by the unfailing Earle Hyman. This is a perfectly reasonable interpretation, but my impression is the parable loses something in the way of emotional interest in the process. And, since "Waiting for Godot" is in the main an intellectual exercise, it is considerably more effective when a bit of emphasis is placed on the less cerebral side of the evening.

Nevertheless, the provocative quality of Mr. Beckett's strikingly original play does remain. Even if you haven't seen it, you must have heard something of what "Waiting for Godot" is about. Two tramps are waiting in some deserted place for the arrival of a mysterious Mr. Godot, whom they have never met but whose arrival will somehow bring them content of some kind. An arrogant rich man named Pozzo and his slave called Lucky appear, and so does a messenger from Godot, but no one else.

Nor does anything really happen, save that Gogo and Didi bicker and make up and think of hanging themselves, but they continue to wait. And, in the process, the waiting becomes the symbolic picture of all of us, seen in terms of music-hall comics, anticipating the arrival of our own Godot, who may be God or any dream or ideal we long for. If the play seems enigmatic, it is not, I think, because the basic meaning is in doubt, but due to the incidental symbols the author uses. Why, for example, is the boy who tends the sheep beaten, but not the brother who looks after the goats? Is it because, as the Bible says, whom God loveth, He chasteneth?

Anyway, the play, with its sadness, its laughter and its melancholy brooding over the human condition, does capture a remarkably disturbing and provocative quality, and it seems to me both stimulating and touching. There are but five actors, and, in addition to Mr. Hyman and Mr. Moreland, they are Rex Ingram as Pozzo, Geoffrey Holder as Lucky, who has but one long, mad speech, and Bert Chamberlain as the boy messenger. "Waiting for Godot" remains deserving of its international fame.

Daily Mirror

January 22, 1957

Robert Coleman's THEATRE:

'Godot' Gives Back All That You Bring to It

• Well done by all-Negro cast, play called "masterpiece" and "clever hoax."

Don't trust that fellow, Godot. He makes appointments and doesn't keep them. If you try to chide him for trifling with your time, he proves to be the little man that isn't there. Not even for a private eye.

Godot is probably the most controversial figure in the theatre this season. Samuel Beckett, who fashioned him, refuses to tell who or what he is. Beckett, former secretary to another obfuscator named James Joyce, merely looks wise and puts you on your own. He's anything you want him to be.

• • •

"WAITING FOR GODOT," in which he never appears but is endlessly discussed, was revived by Michael Meyerberg at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre Monday evening with an excellent all-Negro cast. Mantan Moreland, top-flight comedian, is vastly amusing as Gogo. His interpretation is different from that of Bert Lahr, but quite appealing.

Earle Hyman, an outstanding Shakespearean, is his buddy and straight man, Didi. Hyman, a versatile and accomplished actor, works wonders with the assignment. Rex Ingram, another histrionic stalwart, and Geoffrey Holder, who has been dancing with the Met Opera Ballet, are eminently right as that pompous bully, Pozzo, and his pathetic servant, Lucky.

Beckett, like his mentor Joyce, appears to be more concerned with his medium of expression than content. He states a philosophy by asking questions, which he seldom answers. Socrates, who popularized the dialectic trick, could say a lot with a trenchant question.

• • •

SO IT COMES to this, we think. You'll get as much from "Waiting for Godot" as you bring to it. Beckett supplies an outline for argument, and says: Now write your own tragicomedy. Put all you want into it. Take away what you please. Make Godot anyone you choose. He can be a symbol for anything: Kismet, Fate, or what-have-you.

Many years ago a wonderful vaudeville team, Moss and Frye, anticipated Beckett with a hilarious comedy turn titled "How High Is Up?" It opened with the straight man peering at the sky. The funster of the team wandered on and asked, "What you doin'?" The reply was, "Boy, I'm lookin' up." "How high is up?" came the query.

So, for 15 minutes, they panicked ticket-holders with their discourse on the physical and the philosophical properties of "up." Their banter was as deep as you thought it, or as shallow. But it was brief, and stuck to the point. Beckett traverses further afield with his two-acter in two hours.

• • •

NOW, LIKE OLIVES, "Waiting for Godot" is theatre fare that will enchant or bore you. Many right astute playgoers have hailed it as a masterpiece. Others have dubbed it a clever hoax.

The brutal Pozzo asks, "Do you find it tedious?" And the gentle Didi cracks, "I have been better entertained." Perhaps Beckett is a shrewd critic, as well as a slick dramatist.

Journal-American

January 22, 1957

Play Revival Well Staged; Cast Is Good

By JOHN McCLAIN

THIS is the second time around for me with "Waiting for Godot," which was revived last night at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre with an all-Negro cast, and I can add very little to what I wrote about it originally. It still means all things to all people; to some it is one of the most profound and amusing plays ever written, to others it is a practical joke played by author Samuel Beckett on a gullible, pseudo-intellectual public.

My own feeling about it, again, is that it has great style and humor and is therefore worth a visit. It is doubtful that anything quite like it will be seen again in our time, and while I do not read into it the solemn conclusions that some of my friends come away with, it nevertheless keeps the ball bouncing most of the time and provides endless conversational fodder. It cannot be lightly dismissed.

Story of Mankind Interpreted

As you must have been told by now, Mr. Beckett interprets the story of mankind through a couple of tramps in temporary residence under a stark tree on a barren stage. They stumble, fall, fight, make up and then cling to one another—always waiting for some form of fulfillment which never comes. Life, it seems to say, is a large joke which is being played on all of us, and the reward will arrive on a certain tomorrow which will always be tomorrow.

As in the original New York company, much of the comedy elements are the result of skilled performances, almost detached. Bert Lahr, as the first Gogo, developed a running gag which became increasingly hilarious as the evening wore on. At intervals he was asked what he was doing and he would say, "Waiting for Godot," each time with a mounting inflection of bewilderment, his eyes appealingly crossed.

Mantan Moreland, the present incumbent, has his own style. He answers the eternal question with a futile attempt at song which dwindles off into nothing. He and Earle Hyman, who has the role originated by E. G. Marshall, are busy all evening and I thought they were both superb. It seemed to me that whether or not the present version had been altered more emphasis was given Mr. Hyman, with notable results.

Good Support

There are other excellent contributions by Rex Ingram, probably representing the spirit of fascism, or wealth, or power; by Geoffrey Holder, as his slave, and by Bert Chamberlain, as a boy.

Herbert Berghof has exhibited his fluency of direction once more in transposing the play to the new cast. He appears to have utilized their different talents with taste and ingenuity.

"Godot" remains a highly controversial item, and there will continue to be as many divergent opinions as there are seats in the house. You may not understand it, but you'll have several thousand words to say on the subject.